

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**North
Warwickshire
College of
Technology
and Art**

February 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

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CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	6
Governance and management	18
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	30
Teaching and the promotion of learning	40
Students' achievements	55
Quality assurance	66
Resources	73
Conclusions and issues	82
Figures	

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 30/96

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ART WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected January-November 1995

Summary

North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art is the major provider of further education and training in north Warwickshire. The college is committed to increasing students' opportunities for lifelong learning and to this end provides a wide range of courses and flexible modes of attendance. The work of the college benefits from a supportive corporation and senior staff who provide clear leadership and sense of purpose. There is effective planning and a robust system of financial allocation and budgeting. The academic board is particularly effective in providing a forum for academic debate. Recruitment and induction are efficient. Tutorial support and student services are of a high standard. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good. Students are well motivated and develop appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Quality assurance is a major strength with an emphasis on continuous improvement. Student attendance is good. The staff are well qualified and committed to their work with students. Most have suitable industrial or commercial experience. The implementation of health and safety in some areas of the college could be more effective. GCE A level and GCSE results are variable and there is insufficient analysis of the value added achievements of students. There is a lack of measurable standards in the college charter.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	1
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	2	Health and social care	2
Construction	2	Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Business studies and business administration	2	Art and design	1
Hotel and catering, leisure and tourism	2	Humanities including foreign languages	2
		Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
		Adult and continuing education	2

INTRODUCTION

1 North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art was inspected during the period from January to November 1995. Seventeen inspectors spent a total of 82 days in the college. They visited 224 classes, scrutinised students' work and held discussions with corporation members, students, college managers, teaching and support staff, local employers, parents and representatives of the community, local schools and universities, and the Coventry and Warwickshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation on the college and its courses, and inspected students' enrolment and induction.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The college is the major provider of post-16 education and training for north Warwickshire. It has a main site in Nuneaton and 11 smaller sites, including seven local outreach centres, of which one serves the Asian community in Nuneaton. Three centres are associated with the college's work-based training agency, and one, in the centre of Atherstone, is a focus of support and training for the business community. During 1995-96, the college is building a new centre in Atherstone and is planning a business innovation centre in partnership with the county and borough councils. At the time of the inspection, the college was seeking approval from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) to merge with the nearby Hinckley College. In November 1995, there were 10,047 students enrolled. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college had 472 full-time equivalent staff. A profile of staff expressed as full-time equivalents is given in figure 4.

3 The local economy of north Warwickshire is characterised by a large number of small enterprises and a few major companies. The area has been in industrial decline since the recession of the 1980s and has the highest unemployment and lowest level of income in the county. Through various partnerships the college aims to support local, economic and social development, including co-operative bidding for European Union funding. It aims to meet the needs of small and medium-size enterprises in the locality, often in collaboration with the Coventry and Warwickshire TEC.

4 The college also aims to serve the local communities of north Warwickshire and south-west Leicestershire through outreach and local centres. A substantial adult and community education programme, funded by the FEFC and Warwickshire County Council, is offered at several of the outreach centres. There is a gradual shift of emphasis and reduction in the work funded by Warwickshire County Council. The college has also sustained a post-16 specialist music foundation programme and maintains a music centre for the county in northern Warwickshire catering for 800 students. There are links with local secondary schools, of which four have sixth forms, and a sixth form college, King Edward VI in Nuneaton, which is the major provider of General Certificate of Education advanced level

(GCE A level) courses for 16-19 students in the area. Both colleges share admissions procedures and marketing to schools, a common GCE A level programme and some teaching.

5 The college seeks to develop through a process of continuous quality improvement. Key strategic aims include controlled growth, curriculum innovation and the extension of access to and participation in further and higher education. The college is also committed to making a significant contribution to the economic development of the local area.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college's mission is to provide opportunities for lifelong learning. This is supported by a strategic plan aimed at increasing education and training in north Warwickshire, raising participation rates and improving the achievements of school leavers which are sometimes modest. The college is committed to achieving the national targets for education and training and is aware of changes in the local employment market and of opportunities for skills updating. The college strategic plan is underpinned by well-informed market intelligence. A wide and flexible range of education and training is provided for the local community through full-time and part-time provision on the main site, and through the adult and community programme in outreach centres.

7 The college recruits from 14 schools within north Warwickshire and students are also drawn from south-west Leicestershire. Inspectors met school representatives who commented upon the improved communications between the college and schools. A policy to inform schools of former pupils' achievement has yet to be fully implemented. The college has links with seven local special schools. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is made through mainstream programmes. There is also a number of separate courses for students with severe learning difficulties.

8 The college provides courses in all FEFC programme areas except agriculture. Twenty-four subjects are offered at GCE A level and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and six at GCE advanced supplementary (AS). The 'connections' programme is an interesting feature of provision which provides a combination of GCSE subjects and vocational modules for school leavers with limited educational achievements. A wide range of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and their equivalents are available. Courses also cover a range of examined and accredited provision in basic skills, English for speakers of other languages and some learning for leisure. Warwickshire Training, the college's managing agency, offers TEC-funded training programmes for 500 trainees in a variety of vocational subjects.

9 The college enjoys close co-operation with local universities and offers collaborative higher education courses in art and design, social studies, sports and leisure, business, technology and science. In meetings

with inspectors, university representatives commented favourably on the ability of the college to respond rapidly and effectively to issues raised. The college also offers some full-cost courses, mainly in technology, business administration and health and community. There are many useful contacts with employers. The business liaison centre offers support for business at Nuneaton and Atherstone, where over 50 companies have participated in business meetings. In-house training for NVQs has been provided for Dunlop, Bramcote army barracks and Coventry City Council.

10 Much of the college curriculum is structured into units to enable students to choose and build programmes that are suited to their individual needs. There are complex timetable issues arising from this which have yet to be fully resolved. The college has converted its access to higher education course into a modular form to enable students to enter at different times of the year. Financial incentives are offered to encourage curriculum innovation. A special fund is used to support new developments and 15 per cent of the divisions' budgets is withheld until flexible-curriculum delivery is satisfactorily demonstrated.

11 A strategic aim is to offer all full-time students access to learning a modern European language and an international exchange or work experience by 1997. There are exchanges of staff and students with colleges in Europe and the United States of America. The science department has visited Sweden. European Union funding is used to support an exchange with Spain for leisure and tourism students.

12 The college has established a sophisticated system of labour market analysis and each curriculum division also undertakes its own evaluation of training needs. This has enabled the college to identify opportunities and has encouraged developments such as the business innovation centre at Bermuda Park near the M6. The formal labour market analysis is supported by a network of informal industrial contacts. There is effective communication between the marketing manager and divisional staff. A clear marketing strategy has helped to attract local students, some of whom have negative attitudes towards education and training. The college uses a range of prospectuses, which are effectively targeted to particular markets. Enquiries made at the college's information desk are analysed; this has led to the provision of a new course in plumbing. The recruitment of students is assisted by providing some free bus services from outlying villages.

13 Press and public relations are the responsibility of the marketing officer who has a professional background in this area. Press advertising is used and its effectiveness analysed. Divisions are encouraged to promote newsworthy stories and students' achievements are regularly covered in the media.

14 There are close and well-established relationships with the Coventry and Warwickshire TEC. Warwickshire Training has won many contracts and the TEC regards the college as highly responsive to local business and

training needs. The college has been successful in obtaining funds from the European Union for particular initiatives.

15 The college maintains positive working relations with the county and local district councils as well as some local schools. College staff are represented on local community education councils and this has proved helpful in planning the courses offered in outreach centres. Collaboration with local colleges includes the joint provision of work-based training. Senior staff contribute to the activities of the Central Access Network, part of the national open college network.

16 The parents of students under 18 years old are regularly informed about the progress of their sons and daughters. Guidance has recently been given to tutors to ensure that the quality of this feedback is provided more consistently. Progress reports are sent to parents with an invitation to attend a parents' evening. Contacts with the parents of students over 18 years old are left to the discretion of individual tutors.

17 There is a clear and well-established equal opportunities policy and guidance has recently been given to curriculum areas for its implementation. An equal opportunities committee reports to the academic board. Some college documents are produced in community languages. The policy has been complemented by specific initiatives, including a multicultural activities day and involvement with community groups such as a local Muslim society.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The full membership of the corporation is 20, comprising 11 independent members, two staff members, one member elected by the students, three members from the local community, two co-opted members and the principal. The range of expertise within the corporation relates well to the educational character of the college and its operation. Members have experience of industry, finance, health, law, education, elected bodies and the voluntary services. Three members are women. The corporation has delayed filling six vacancies because of the proposed merger with Hinckley College. The inclusion of three community members is in conflict with the articles and instruments of government which states that there should only be two. The corporation is strongly committed to the college and its mission of providing lifelong learning to the local community. Its strategic role is clearly differentiated from the operational responsibilities of the principal. There is effective evaluation of the college's performance and development. The corporation has established a code of conduct and a register of members' interests.

19 Members of the corporation are actively involved in many areas of college life. They join advisory committees, give talks to students and interview candidates for key college jobs. The clerk to the corporation also serves as assistant to the principal. She has a clear job description and her dual role is regularly subject to review.

20 There are five subcommittees of the corporation; finance and general purposes, personnel, audit, remuneration and search. Four of the subcommittees have appropriate constitutions, remits and responsibilities. This is not so in the case of the search committee, which does, however, have clear criteria for the recruitment of new corporation members. Subcommittee members are selected for their appropriate experience and expertise. For example, the chairman of the audit committee is a qualified accountant. Attendance at corporation and the subcommittees meetings is good, but the number of vacancies in the corporation places a heavy burden on existing members.

21 The strategic plan and corporate objectives reflect the college's mission statement and benefit from the clear direction of senior managers. The plan is drafted by the senior management team after thorough consultation with divisional directors, cross-college managers and staff. It is then reviewed and approved by the corporation. There are clear links to the operating statements of the divisions and the cross-college services, all of which have clear aims and objectives. The operating statements, which are the main method for the implementation of the strategic plan, indicate targets, resource implications, staff development and the monitoring process. The college's overall operating statement is a more limited document which lacks the detail and precision of the divisional operating statements.

22 There are well-developed policies for health and safety, student support and equal opportunities. The college has a system of duty officers made up of college managers. Apart from dealing with any complaints, the major focus of their work is safety and emergencies. The college employs a consultant to provide an independent assessment of health and safety. The implementation of health and safety policy has not always been effective. There have been some concerns expressed by students about fire drills and there are dust and debris in some workshops. The college does not have an approved environmental policy but a final draft has been prepared and is under discussion.

23 College management is effective and provides open, supportive and responsive leadership. Managers are committed to the college's mission and have a clear sense of purpose and unity. The five senior managers, including the principal, meet weekly on a formal basis and are in contact daily. They are supported by the college management group of divisional academic directors and managers of student and college services. Both groups meet together fortnightly. Organisation structures, lines of communication and accountability are clear and encompass the college's multi-site character and diverse range of provision. In mathematics and science there is some lack of clarity about staff duties and responsibilities. Senior management are aware of this situation and have reorganised the area with the aim of improving the situation. Staff receive an informative weekly bulletin.

24 The academic board is particularly effective. The remit and membership are clear and the board provides an effective forum for academic debate. The academic board has six subcommittees. The minutes of the board and other college committees present a useful account of the college's activities. In a small number of cases, where action is required, it is unclear who has responsibility.

25 There is an established, responsive and well-understood system of financial allocation. It is accountable and encourages a sense of ownership. Budgets are devolved to divisions and cross-college service cost centres. They are based on student numbers, the nature of the educational programmes and the college services being provided. The level of funding to the budget holders is adjusted three times a year to reflect actual student numbers. The system is monitored regularly by the senior management and, where necessary, adjustments made. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 was £16.58 per unit. The median level of funding for general further education and tertiary colleges for that year was £18.17. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Budgets are calculated on the number of full-time equivalent students, although a move to a unit-based system is proposed from August 1996.

26 The management information service provides a wide range of information and is a useful tool for senior and middle managers as well as a growing number of other staff. There is access to management information through a computer network which is updated daily from a number of other databases. Reports can be tailored to specific requests, such as the number of funding units a student can earn or the ethnicity of students. Sessions to promote awareness of management information systems have been successful in increasing staff appreciation of the scope and potential of the information available.

27 Targets are effectively set for enrolments, retention and full-cost course income; from the 1995-96 academic year students' achievements will also be included. Targets are agreed with the divisions. Enrolment targets play a key part in strategic planning and establishing annual budgets. Divisional directors propose targets on the basis of potential enrolments and the college's target for growth. The target setting exercise is guided, monitored and reviewed by the college's senior managers through termly meetings.

28 Student retention targets are realistic and based on clear criteria such as previous figures, mode of attendance and the nature of the provision. They are reviewed regularly by the senior management. The termly financial allocation is based on student numbers. This ensures that divisional managers monitor retention. Retention is above target in most cases with only one division having figures significantly below.

29 The college has improved the monitoring of student destinations by setting clear deadlines for the receipt of information and by re-emphasising

the course tutors' responsibility for collecting the data. However, a few teachers are still not aware of their responsibility for collecting information. For students completing courses in 1994-95, the college successfully monitored the destinations of 91 per cent, a substantial achievement.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 Attractive prospectuses, course leaflets and posters give clear information on courses and fees. Advice on courses and career opportunities is provided throughout the year by visits to schools, a college roadshow, careers conventions, open days and organised visits by schools pupils. Students are well informed and positive about the advice available to them. The college offers a number of taster courses to prospective students, notably an eight-day course in June for students with learning difficulties.

31 The college responds to applications promptly. Students report that they receive replies and invitations to interview within a few days, well within the target time set by the college. Admissions are organised centrally by the guidance and admissions unit. There is a policy statement and staff handbook on admissions. There is a welcoming informal atmosphere in the college that begins with reception. All students receive a guidance and programme interview designed to diagnose specific requirements and ensure placement on the appropriate course. There is a close working partnership with King Edward VI College, Nuneaton, to advise year 11 pupils about educational opportunities and a joint application system for a group of 10 local schools. The system works well. Applications are received and students enrolled throughout the academic year. The admissions form has been regularly updated and is designed to help in the assessment of students' needs.

32 Students with particular needs are identified through school reports, application forms and initial screening, including basic skills agency screening. Outcomes are communicated promptly to tutors and a significant number of students receive additional support with their courses. There is a clear policy statement on the accreditation of students' prior learning and a trained member of the admissions and guidance unit is able to provide relevant advice during admissions. Accreditation of prior learning is variable across the college. It is used most in health care, business, construction, beauty and hairdressing.

33 The admissions and guidance process ensures students are enrolled on the right course. The two-day induction for full-time students is well developed, useful and thorough. Most students find the programme helpful, although a few reported that some sessions were too long and lacked variety. The induction of part-time students is more varied, depending on the nature of the course to be followed. There is a helpful scheme in which second-year students assist new colleagues. Where necessary, students are helped to transfer between courses.

34 The quality of tutorial support is high. A new policy was introduced in September 1995 which builds on existing good practice and caters for the different approaches of subject divisions. The policy clearly indicates students' entitlement, including the level of the tutorial support available, students' access to their own records and feedback to parents, employers and managing agents. Tutors are responsible for the completion of learning agreements, action planning and tracking, and liaison with appropriate learning support staff. Thorough records are maintained and discussions with students revealed a widespread enthusiasm for the system. In addition to subject tutorials, there is an open tutorial programme offering advice on careers, higher education applications, writing, and note-taking skills.

35 The college provides additional educational support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are clear policies in place and the work is well documented. High-quality assistance is provided for students on access, basic skills and English as a second language courses. Students at outreach sites have access to the same range of support services as those at the main site. A study-support workshop is available to all students and provides assistance in study and core skills. There are information technology facilities and aids for students with sight and hearing impairments, partly funded by the local TEC. The atmosphere is informal and a tutor is available at all times to support students in their work.

36 A responsive and well-integrated careers service is available on the main site, staffed by Warwickshire Careers Service. Careers officers contribute to the open tutorial programmes and are available for special guidance sessions and individual appointments. There is a need to provide more specialist advice on employment opportunities for students wanting to work in leisure and tourism, and art and design. The college's well-qualified personal counselling team provides a helpful service, offering short-term, medium-term and long-term support. The service is well advertised and all students spoken to were aware of the support available. Suitable confidential facilities are available and the case load is monitored carefully.

37 The use and development of students' records of achievement vary across the college. Many students see them as related to their school activities only. Where records of achievements are used they are linked to action plans by tutors. Well-kept records were seen in outreach centres and in adult basic education and catering.

38 Student attendance is systematically monitored in most areas. Tutors are informed of student absences by subject staff and follow up repeated absences. They are responsible for any action that may be necessary, including informing parents or employers. Registers are audited by college managers. In humanities and business, attendance is less effectively monitored and this is reflected in a lower attendance rate.

39 A student liaison team of four is in place to support and enhance students' experiences at college. The team provides students with advice, organises social events and represents students' interests. They also offer support to the students' union. The college provides nursery facilities on the main site for 30 children, although there are no facilities for children under two. There are smaller nursery facilities at three of the outreach centres. The college operates a number of special funds and information on these is widely available. They include a fund for students in financial need, the access fund for students over 19 years old, a hardship fund and a travel fund.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 Sixty-eight per cent of the 224 teaching sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses and in a further 26 per cent there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In 6 per cent of sessions the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in all the classes observed was 79 per cent and there was an average of 11 students present in each lesson. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		3	11	9	0	1	24
GCSE		3	6	5	0	0	14
GNVQ		7	22	10	3	0	42
NVQ		10	22	17	1	0	50
Basic education		1	1	0	0	0	2
Access to higher education		2	4	2	0	0	8
Other		17	43	15	8	1	84
Total		43	109	58	12	2	224

41 There were well-planned programmes in all curriculum areas, supported in virtually all cases by clear schemes of work and lesson plans. In hotel and catering, and leisure and tourism, some schemes of work lacked clear learning objectives. In science, while teaching schemes were generally well developed, there was no common approach. Effective teaching and learning sessions were observed in all subjects, helped by consistently positive working relations between students and teaching staff. Teaching was supportive across all areas. In general, the work was challenging and this was particularly the case in art and design, business studies, engineering, and leisure and tourism. However, there was insufficient challenge in some sessions in health care and hairdressing and beauty, as well as in some assessments in mathematics. Visual aids

were widely used to support teaching, though their quality and relevance was variable.

42 The majority of work inspected in science was good, although student numbers in classes were low. Programmes of study took account of the needs of adult students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A positive feature was the drop-in workshop in which students received individual guidance from subject teachers. Support from the tutor enabled students to extend their subject knowledge and to develop communication skills. Visual aids were fairly widely used but not always to the best effect in the teaching of science. The use of inappropriate software limited the effective application of information technology.

43 In mathematics, there was imaginative and effective work in basic numeracy which developed students' understanding. Mathematics for vocational programmes was reasonably well developed, although links with the vocational context could have been strengthened. Most teaching comprised lectures with few opportunities for practical or group work. There were few references to the use of information technology, calculators and other mathematical technology, such as graphical calculators. Teaching took insufficient account of the different abilities of students. The teaching of computing was effective, well managed and supported by audio-visual aids. Students were encouraged to progress at their own pace and to develop problem solving skills. Students' learning was held back by some unreliable and outdated hardware and software. Students' theoretical understanding was not always sufficiently developed.

44 Teaching in construction was of good quality. Programmes were coherent, vocationally relevant and well supported by the broad range and design of practical projects and the development of students' study packages. Practical work was successfully taught and students achieved good levels of competence.

45 In business studies and administration, the teaching ensured that all students were challenged by the work while allowing the different learning needs of students to be met. Progression through the NVQ programmes was based on individual performance. The learning and understanding of students were regularly checked. The learning needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were well addressed. In some of the weaker sessions students were not encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The quality of handouts used in some classes could have been improved and learning materials were not always sufficiently checked for accuracy.

46 In leisure and tourism, the teaching effectively extended the understanding of students. In an effective GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism programme the division of the class into small groups enabled a choice of relevant optional units to be provided. Sessions were well structured and students' learning was carefully checked. In a few classes there was insufficient variety of teaching methods to retain students' interest.

47 In hotel and catering, the quality of teaching and learning enabled students to acquire new skills and to build successfully on those they already possessed. Finished work was of a high standard. In one example, a student had planned and organised a theme evening which attracted over 90 customers. Guided by a lecturer, he organised and supervised the performance of other students. The event provided a realistic work experience in reception, food and drink service and professional cookery. Theory classes assisted students' understanding and were well supported by appropriate visual aids. Poor accommodation occasionally detracted from the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

48 Classes in health care were well organised and reflected current practice. Students' participation was encouraged and question and answer sessions enabled students to develop their oral skills. For example, in one class students developed their debating skills through discussing the relative merits of breast and bottle feeding and questioning a representative of a powdered milk company. There was a lack of participation by students in some sessions.

49 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, teaching was precise and clear. There were useful internally devised learning packs which assisted students to work independently. The accommodation was of good quality and enabled the creation of effective realistic working environments. Some of the teaching failed to make adequate checks on students' understanding.

50 In art and design, the quality of teaching and learning was consistently high. Individual assignments were imaginative and clearly specified the skills to be assessed. Work was challenging and innovative, and involved a wide range of technical skills. Regular use of observation through life drawing brought quality and relevance to students' work. Teaching was improved further by the professional studio environment and well informed by the involvement of staff in current art and design practice. Students were assisted in their development of core skills. More use of audio-visual aids would have improved teaching.

51 In humanities, the quality of teaching and learning varied. In English lessons, the needs of the less able students were particularly well addressed; this was significant in enabling them to achieve success. Teaching and learning was underpinned by good resources for open learning. The atmosphere in classrooms was purposeful and co-operative. Worksheets were particularly helpful in assisting students to revise. In modern foreign languages much attention was focused on effective teaching within vocational contexts. Staff were particularly skilful in helping students to study independently. In the best classes, students were encouraged to understand and use the language being learned confidently. For engineering students there was careful rehearsal of German technical terms. In other humanities subjects, teachers were well informed and in the better sessions they used methods which tested students' capabilities to the full and advanced their knowledge. There was some effective use of audio-visual aids. The extent to which students

participated in classes varied. In some cases, teaching was too rapid for students to take notes. There were some weaknesses in students' theoretical understanding and the needs of students with different abilities were not always sufficiently addressed.

52 In the college's substantial adult and community education provision much of the teaching was good. Schemes of work and lesson plans included useful individual plans for students in basic skills and English for speakers of other languages classes. The quality of teaching on the access to higher education course was well attuned to mature students and took care to develop their understanding. Helpful support for students with various kinds of disability was provided. An art and design student who had recently lost her sight was carefully advised about which kinds of crafts were suitable to her needs. Students were encouraged to work at their own pace, though in a few classes the tasks set were not well matched to the abilities of different students.

53 In classes for students with severe and moderate learning difficulties, staff were consistently supportive and helped students to acquire the skills needed to ensure a successful transition from adolescent to adult life. The teaching and learning methods used were creative and strengthened students' motivation. Students' records were well developed. In the weaker sessions, student progress was not adequately monitored. Some students with moderate learning difficulties were insufficiently challenged. The different learning needs of individual students were not always sufficiently addressed.

54 The college has a substantial and centrally co-ordinated programme of work experience for students. In 1994-95 almost 800 students completed work experience. The quality of placements, including insurance arrangements, is checked. There is a detailed database of employers willing to offer placements, which includes the type of work available and a record of students' placements. Advisory documents on conduct during work placements are not distributed to all students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

55 In the majority of sessions, students enjoyed their studies and were well motivated. They developed levels of knowledge and understanding appropriate to their level of study and capability. Most students had the confidence and ability to apply their skills. The level of achievement was clearly shown in construction by the range and quality of the work produced for practical assignments. Students in art and design had the confidence to work independently and were developing a wide range of relevant technical skills. Many produced imaginative work of high quality and possessed the technical vocabulary to describe their work in a vocationally relevant manner.

56 Students demonstrated well-developed problem-solving skills in computing and hairdressing practical sessions. In GNVQ leisure and

tourism, students worked on their own using the college's information technology facilities to prepare a budget for a hotel. Students in health and care, business, and leisure and tourism were able to work on practical assignments, independently and in groups. In practical sessions for professional cookery, food service and reception, students demonstrated a high level of competence and good team skills. Some students in hairdressing felt there were insufficient opportunities for practical salon work. In general, students carried out practical work competently and safely. Where appropriate, such as in catering and hairdressing, students were suitably dressed in protective clothing.

57 The development of students' core skills varied across the college. Core skills in business studies, health and care, leisure and tourism, hair and beauty were well organised and all students received appropriate help with numeracy, literacy study skills and information technology. Students' participation in lessons often showed the application of these skills. In leisure and tourism and hairdressing core skills were focused on the needs of industry. In humanities there was no consistent policy, although students on GCE A level and GCSE programmes were able to use information technology in their studies. In business and administration some teachers failed to correct spelling and grammatical errors in students' work. There was limited development of core skills, including information technology skills, in mathematics teaching other than numeracy.

58 There are some good results for the 80 per cent of college students on vocational programmes. Eighty-two per cent of students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, these figures represent less than 7 per cent of 3,444 students achieving their primary learning goal in the final part of study on vocational subjects at the college.

59 Using the figures for all of the students completing vocational programmes in 1995, those on courses leading to City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualifications were the most successful, with 89 per cent achieving awards. Eighty-three per cent of those completing Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) programmes also gained awards. The college achieved pass rates above the national average in a number of vocational areas. For example, in art and design, 87 per cent of GNVQ intermediate students were successful, well above the national average of 49 per cent. Similarly, 72 per cent of students were successful on the GNVQ advanced in leisure and tourism, compared with the national average of 44 per cent. The college has increased the number of students achieving open college network credits, especially on the access courses.

60 Two hundred and two students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95, scored, on average, 2.9 points per entry. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further

education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. A greater number of students over 19 years old, 225 in total, completed one-year GCE A level courses in 1995. These students performed well, with a majority achieving results above the national average for colleges of further education. Notably, 72 per cent of full-time mature students completing one-year GCE A level courses were successful in progressing to higher education or employment. There is some evidence to suggest that students aged 16-18 who sat GCE A level examinations arrived with GCSE results below the national average, but the college has done little work to measure the value-added element in the advanced level achievements of these students. This deficiency is recognised and the college has recently joined the Advanced Level Information System.

61 GCSE examination results for 1994-95 were variable, with 353 entries out of 900 achieving grades A-C. In English, over the past three years, 75 per cent of students achieved A-C grades, a percentage above the national average. Similarly, in sociology and geography results above the national average have been achieved over the same period. In contrast, in psychology, law and history there has been a fall in the pass rates in the last two years. Mathematics examination passes were well below the national average. The results obtained by students in science subjects were a cause for concern; on the largest science course, over the last two years, only 18 and 9 per cent of students gained a pass grade A-C. The college has recognised these problems and has changed its admissions policy to permit only students with grade D results to take further GCSE resits.

62 Participation in the Bedworth Christian Centre Cafe project has enabled some 17 students with learning disabilities to gain nationally-recognised qualifications in basic hygiene and to progress onto the NVQ course in catering and hospitality.

63 In access to higher education courses, 85 per cent of students completing the course achieved the access certificate in 1995. This good level of success highlights a steady improvement in recent years. On the adult continuing education programme there were good examination results in counselling and GCE A levels and GCSEs offered and a high proportion of students achieved credits on the open college network accredited courses. Low numbers of students sought accreditation on basic skills and English for speakers of other languages courses. On a course linking sewing skills with English for speakers of other languages almost all students gained open college network accreditation and improved their command of everyday English as well as their knowledge of specialist sewing terms.

64 The average retention rate in the college is 83 per cent. Effective monitoring has identified the main reasons for non-completion of courses as personal, financial or obtaining employment. Full-time student

destinations are collected at course and divisional level. Thirty-five per cent of students undertook further courses in the college, 19 per cent proceeded to higher education, 24 per cent obtained employment, a high proportion at 13 per cent were listed as other, which included students leaving the locality. The college has no information on the destinations of 9 per cent of students.

65 Four students, all female, received national awards in 1994-95. A silver medal from C&G was awarded for achievements in the further education teachers' certificate. Another student received a bronze medal from C&G for high success in the diploma in vocational education. A third gained the Chartered Institute of Marketing award for the best result in their certificate papers. The fourth was a mature student who gained a certificate of excellence from the University of Cambridge Examinations Board for the highest grades achieved in GCE A level biology.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

66 The responsibility for quality assurance resides with the vice-principal. There are well-developed links between quality assurance and strategic planning, in line with the mission statement's pledge of continuing quality improvement. The college is committed to a total quality management approach. Considerable effort and resources have been successfully devoted to the integration of this approach into all aspects of college life. The strategic plan gives a clear commitment to include all staff in total quality management by July 1996. Staff teams participate in development days focused on continuous quality improvement. These have resulted in improved internal communications and better use of resources. The college is recognised as an Investor in People and has been awarded two quality marks by the Basic Skills Agency.

67 There are internal peer review processes for all existing courses and validation of all proposals for courses over 100 hours in length. Both mechanisms are extremely rigorous, but also supportive. Quality issues raised by students, staff or the wider community, including employers, are responded to and resolved. A good example of this responsiveness has been the development of a one-year advanced GNVQ business studies course together with the production of an improved GNVQ student handbook. The college might wish to consider setting up a process by which issues, once dealt with, can be signed off by a senior manager to signal a clear end.

68 The college charter, produced in 1993 in response to the national charter for further education, addresses all the issues that affect students, employers, the local community and parents. Most students, when asked, were aware of the charter and their rights. Some students reported that after complaints were made there was a lack of feedback on the actions taken. Complaints are monitored and the senior management team and the quality subcommittee of the academic board receive termly reports which analyse trends. There are few clear and measurable standards in

the charter. It is planned to carry out a major review in 1996. The standards from service level agreements, which are gradually being introduced in the college, will be incorporated. While reference to the charter is made in the student induction process, students are not issued with a personal copy of the document. However, it can be obtained on request. The charter entitlements are supported by a comprehensive range of student services.

69 Standards are clearly set and monitored. The responsibility for monitoring at every level is clear. The management information system provides division managers with weekly updates of performance against agreed indicators. The senior management team takes a keen interest in quality matters and elicits feedback from external sources. Moderators' and assessors' reports are shared and action taken. Students' reasons for leaving before completion are carefully monitored. Student perception surveys are conducted termly and the results are subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the quality support monitoring manager. Matters of concern are drawn to the attention of the relevant division manager. The refurbishment of the refectory was carried out in response to student views.

70 A survey of employers' perceptions in 1995 revealed a positive view of provision. Employers were impressed with the college's willingness to find out their needs and respond to them. The survey showed a high satisfaction rate, with 76 per cent of the employers regarding courses as relevant to the needs of their employees. Ninety per cent asked for follow-up programmes. The survey also tested the effects of the college's programmes on the ability of employees to do their job, their attitude to work and the effectiveness of their performance after the course. The results were positive.

71 Staff development benefits from clear aims and staff entitlements. The take up of staff-development programmes shows significant improvement over the past two years. The effectiveness of programmes is evaluated by a centrally administered questionnaire, while a variety of techniques is used to test programmes against individual, divisional and corporate objectives. There are effective arrangements in place for sharing the outcomes of training events. The academic board keeps the whole process under review through an effective and widely drawn subcommittee. Staff appraisal is available to all staff who work for more than six hours per week; participation is high even where it is not contractual. Part-time staff can elect to have either a full appraisal interview or a training needs analysis. The principal is appraised by the chairman of the corporation. A number of modifications are planned to further improve the appraisal system. The figure spent on staff development represents almost 2 per cent of the staffing budget.

72 The college's self-assessment report for 1994-95 is an impressive working document. It deals comprehensively with the work of the college

against the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report was produced by involving staff at all levels and is seen as a natural outcome of the college review mechanisms. The document identifies staff responsibilities for addressing issues, but it does not indicate timescales for achieving results. These are usually to be found in the source documents. The evaluation is clear, with a concise and realistic summary of strengths and areas requiring further development. The judgements are well supported by a strong evidence base.

RESOURCES

Staffing

73 Staff are generally well qualified, enthusiastic and committed to their work. Just over 80 per cent of the teachers hold a first degree or have appropriate professional qualifications, with 20 per cent holding a higher degree. About 75 per cent possess a teaching qualification. Over 65 per cent of teachers and 21 support staff have the assessor award of the lead training body. A total of 40 staff hold the internal verifier award and three the external award. Accreditation of prior learning is supported by 22 appropriately-qualified staff, a significant achievement. Most staff have suitable industrial and commercial experience. The involvement of art and design staff in current professional practice contributes to the vocational relevance of their teaching. Personnel, finance, estates and careers benefit from professionally-qualified staff. In meetings with inspectors, employers confirmed the flexibility and responsiveness of college staff and their responsiveness to the changing needs of industry.

74 Staff are efficiently deployed to cover the present range of courses. Since incorporation, the decrease in full-time teachers has been compensated by an equivalent increase in part-time staff. Generally, part-time staff are well supported in most areas. In hairdressing, where half the staff are part time, a useful trainer's handbook has been produced covering administration, curriculum and communications issues. There is a good balance of support staff to teachers in most areas. Staffing needs are reviewed regularly and any necessary changes in full-time staffing are determined by the senior management team. Divisional directors control the appointment of part-time teaching staff who are used effectively in some areas to complement the expertise of full-time teachers. While the majority of parents met by inspectors were positive about the staff, a few voiced concern over some aspects of the teaching.

Equipment/learning resources

75 Classrooms are appropriately equipped in most programme areas. The range and quantity of teaching and learning aids is satisfactory. Delegated budgets ensure appropriate levels of funding for students' materials in the majority of areas. The well-equipped hairdressing and beauty salons have been upgraded by internally-generated income. College

equipment is well maintained. However, much of the instrumentation used in the BTEC national diploma in science was obsolete.

76 Although the overall ratio of computers to students is 1:9, provision is barely adequate. Significant efforts have been made to meet the information technology needs of students with impaired hearing and vision through the purchase of specialist learning technology. The recent purchase of 12 laptop computers has increased the information technology available to outreach centres. The majority of computers available to students are networked. Many of the computers available to students do not have the capacity to run up-to-date software. This is holding back the development of information technology.

77 The central learning resource area is well led and supported by adequate numbers of staff, including two qualified librarians. The area includes enough study spaces to meet the demand from students, and study support and mathematics workshops. A large open access information technology centre available to students at the main site has good professional support. The central learning resource area is open on Saturday mornings in response to demand from mature students. Further consideration should be given to extending opening hours beyond 20.00 on weekdays. The quality and quantity of books in the library requires further improvement in some subject areas. All books have been electronically recorded, although there is no electronic-based issuing system. There is no monitoring of book usage. The college librarian sits on the validation panel for new courses and this helps to ensure that initial book requirements are identified. The library has an effective and equitable system for ensuring that books are returned, with both staff and students paying fines for the late return of books.

Accommodation

78 All college sites are in Nuneaton or within a 17-mile radius. The buildings are a mixture of traditional and hatted accommodation. Generally, the exteriors of the buildings are in good condition. Teaching accommodation is generally of a high standard and most is well furnished. Most classrooms and workshops are suitable in size and layout, although some are inappropriate for larger classes or where individual workspaces are needed for activities, such as bricklaying and textiles. Students' work, particularly in art and design, is prominently displayed to improve the college's appearance.

79 Recent changes to the internal layout of the college have led to better utilisation of the buildings. The college recognises the need for further improvement in this area. There is a general lack of storage space in the college. Refurbishment carried out during the past three years has been completed to a good standard. Accommodation is of high quality in the science and mathematics area, the drop-in computer centre, the art and design building, the new hairdressing salon, the refectory and parts of the technology block. A new and impressive building is under construction at

Atherstone to meet the needs of the local community. Several areas of the college are still in need of renovation. The accommodation strategy includes a commitment to replace all of the hatted accommodation over time.

80 The students' centre is attractive and well used, though at peak times it is crowded. This is also true of other social amenities. Access for wheelchair users is generally good at most sites but is limited at the Denham House and Camp Hill sites, and at the Sports Centre. Accommodation for support staff is generally good. The quality of staffrooms is variable; many are spacious and comfortable, others are overcrowded and often untidy. The staff lounge next to the main refectory is of a very high standard.

81 There is imaginative landscaping around the buildings, especially at the Nuneaton site. The grounds are pleasant and carefully tended. Car parking facilities at the main site have been recently extended but there is insufficient car parking at the Bedworth site. Standards of maintenance and caretaking are good and most areas of the college are clean and free from vandalism. Improved signposting is required on most sites.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

82 The strengths of the college are:

- the strong commitment to increase opportunities for lifelong learning
- a wide and flexible range of courses
- effective and responsive governance which gives strong support to management
- management which provides clear leadership
- comprehensive strategic planning
- a robust system of financial allocation and budgeting
- a particularly effective academic board
- effective recruitment procedures, tutorial support and student services
- good teaching in most areas
- well-motivated students who develop appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding
- a significant and effective quality assurance system with an emphasis on continuous improvement
- good levels of attendance
- well-qualified, enthusiastic and committed staff.

83 To maintain and improve the quality of the provision, the college should address the following:

- the variability of GCE A level and GCSE results
- the need for more effective implementation of health and safety in some areas
- the lack of value-added analysis of students' achievements
- the lack of measurable standards in the college charter
- the significant number of computers unable to run up-to-date software.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

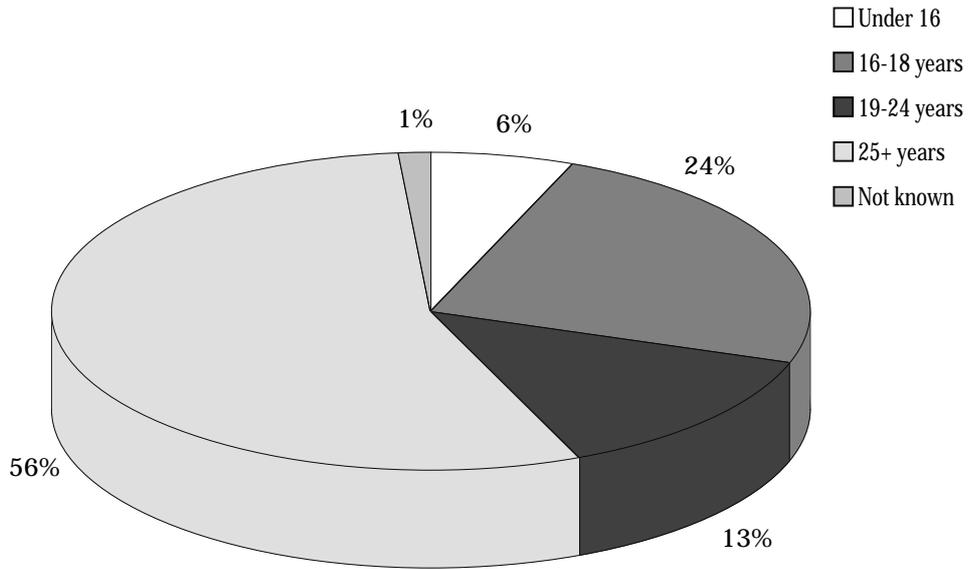
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

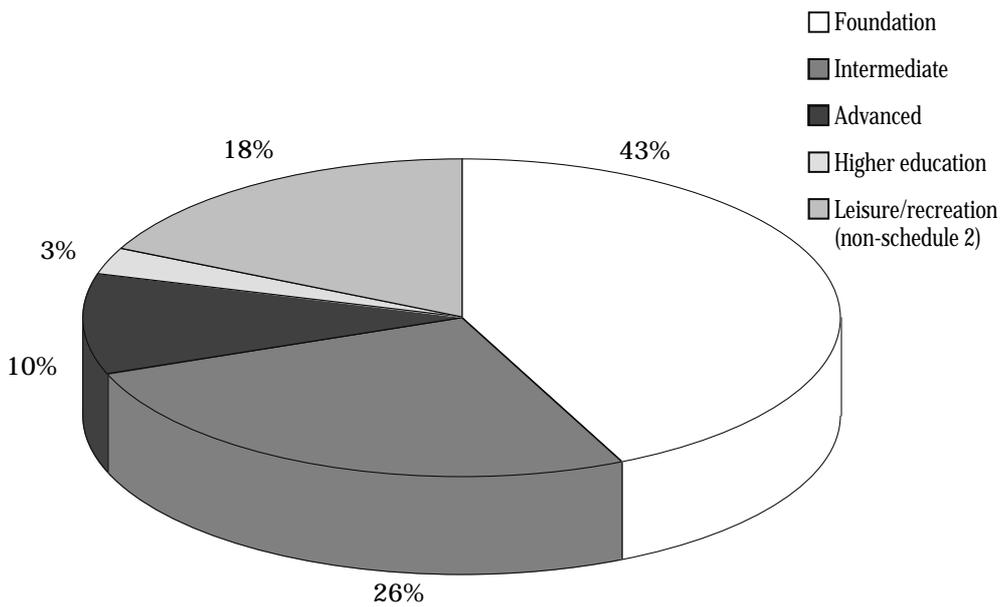
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)



Enrolments: 10,047

Figure 2

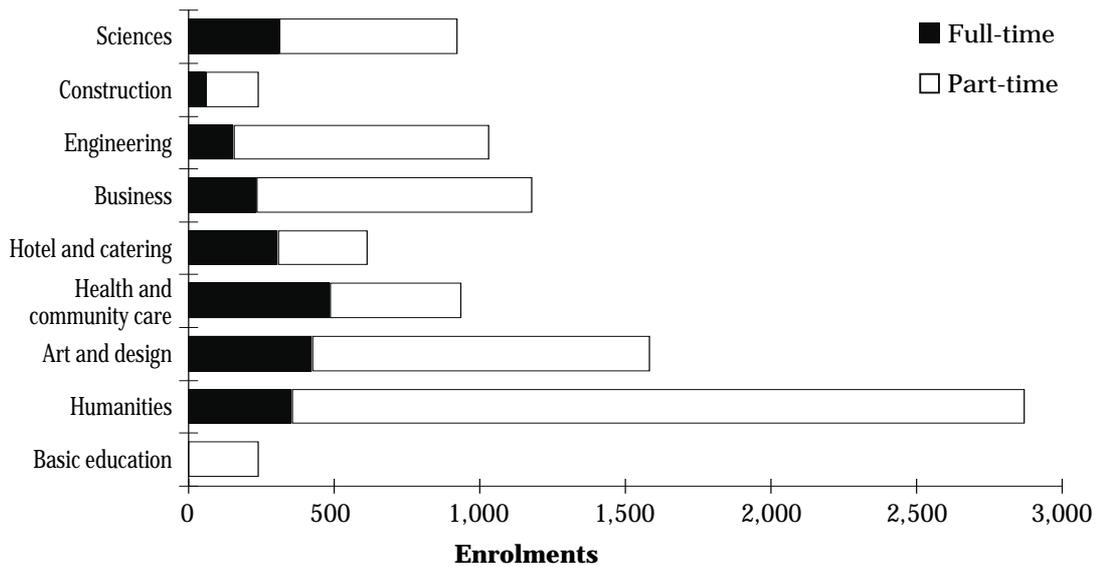
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)



Enrolments: 10,047

Figure 3

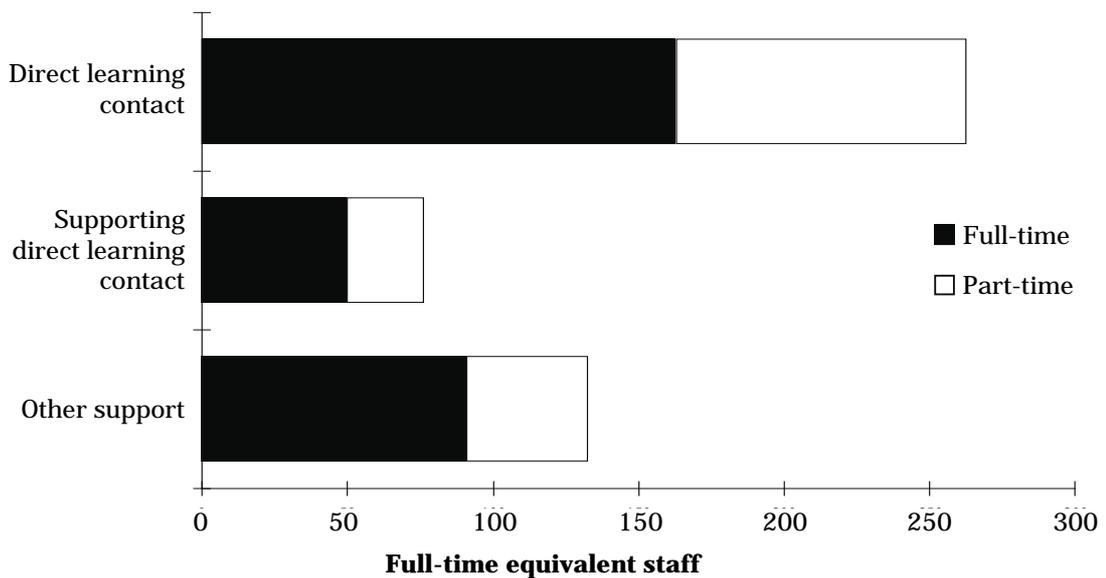
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)



Enrolments: 10,047

Figure 4

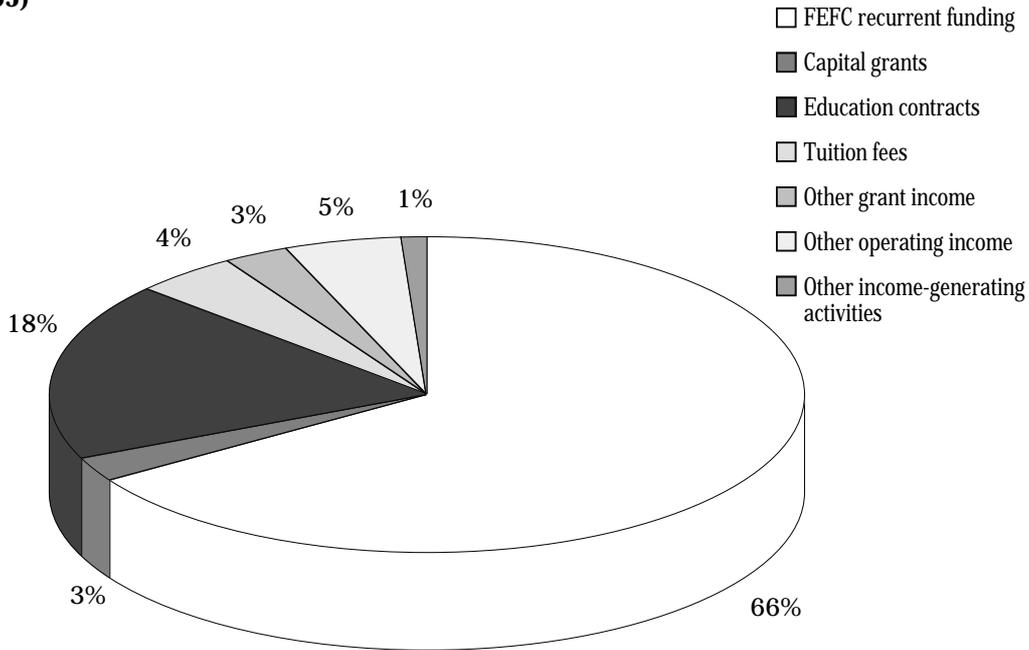
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 472

Figure 5

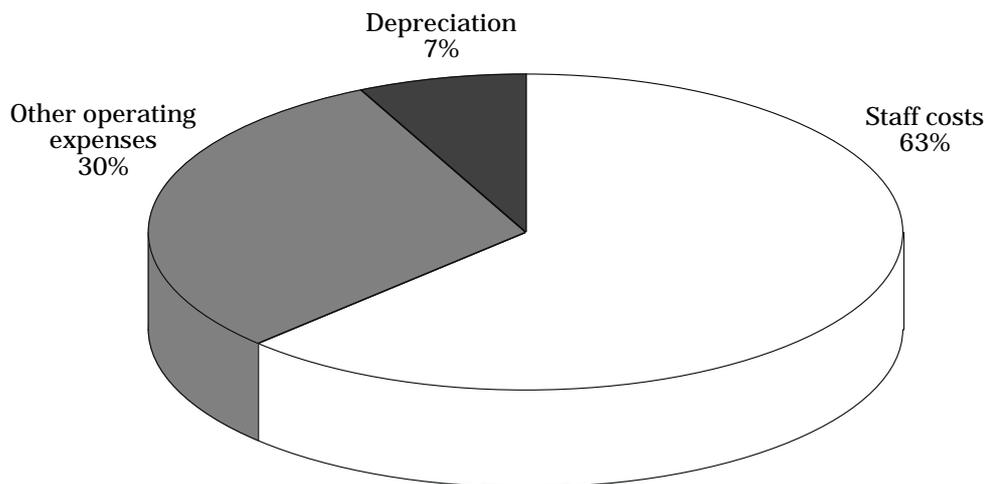
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £13,147,609

Figure 6

North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £13,713,859

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